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HIMANTA TAKES OATH AS ASSAM CM FOR SECOND SUCCESSIVE TERM

The BJP-led NDA assumed the mantle of power for the third term on Tuesday when Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn as in CM of Assam

25-MINUTE CEREMONY SAW TOP BJP LEADERS

Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office to Sarma and the four legislators at a 25-minute ceremony held at the Veterinary Ground in Khanapara area in Guwahati. Besides PM Modi and Amit Shah, Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita, and other top leaders were present | **P12**

GREAT DAY FOR ASSAM, SAYS PM MODI

- The PM said NDA assuming office for the third consecutive term was a "great day for Assam" and congratulated Sarma
- BJP's Rameshwar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora, and Charan Boro of BPF also took oath as ministers, representing the tea community, women, the regional community and the Bodo tribe

102

SEATS OF 126 SEATS IN ASSAM WERE WON BY THE BJP-LED NDA COALITION

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

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NEET-UG cancelled, CBI begins paper leak probe

Re-exam notice in 7-10 days; one accused arrested from Nashik

LALITHA S, SUDHIR SURYAWANSHI & RAJESH ASNANI @ New Delhi/Nashik/Jaipur

THE NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on May 3 was cancelled on Tuesday amid allegations of paper leak, with the CBI registering an FIR after the government asked it to probe the "irregularities".

The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the exam for admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges, said fresh dates will be notified in the "next seven to 10 days" for the re-exam.

The cancellation triggered nationwide outrage among medical aspirants, with students raising questions on NTA's competence and demanding that the exam be conducted by AIIMS-Delhi. The Opposition attacked the Centre, alleging administrative failure, insensitivity toward students and "repeated lapses" in the conduct of national-level competitive examinations.

The Rajasthan Special Operations Group (SOG), which probed the leak first, found that before the exam, a 150-page "guess paper" was circulated among students in Jaipur, Sikar, Jhunjhunu and Churu districts. The document contained 410 questions of which 135 figured in the actual exam paper.

As per Rajasthan Police, the match was not limited to the questions alone. Investigators found similarities in sequence of options, language and punctuation marks. The SOG has so far detained 15 people, including Manish Yadav from Jaipur and Rakesh Mandawaria from Sikar. Manish Yadav is said to be the 'mastermind' of the paper leak operation in Rajasthan. Investigators also found that all 90 Biology questions and all 45 Chemistry questions in NEET exam matched the circulated material.

Preliminary investigations suggest that a student from Churu, currently pursuing MBBS in Kerala, allegedly sent the question bank to a person in Sikar, who passed it to a PG accommodation operator in Sikar, who further shared it among students there.

After the examination on May 3, a PG operator in Sikar filed a complaint with the Udyog Nagar police station and the NTA, alleging that a large number of students had received the suspected question bank before the exam. Following this, police sprang into action, sources said.

The CBI registered cases of criminal conspiracy, cheating, criminal breach of trust, theft and destruction of evidence under BNS, besides offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act and Public Examination (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. **P2,11**

Similarities in sequence of options, language

Rajasthan Police said the match with the guess paper was not limited to the questions alone. Investigators found similarities in sequence of options, language and punctuation marks

BAMS graduate arrested in Nashik, probe on

A 30-year-old BAMS graduate from Nashik was arrested Tuesday. Police said he bought the leaked paper for ₹10L and resold 10 sets at ₹15L lakh each in Rajasthan and Maharashtra

SFI members and supporters stage a protest against the cancellation of NEET 2026, after NTA cancelled the exam held on May 3, in New Delhi on Tuesday | PRAVEEN NEGI

Rahul dissent note to panel tasked to pick new CBI boss

SUMIT KUMAR SINGH @ New Delhi

THE selection of the next CBI chief on Tuesday was marred by controversy as Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi issued a dissent note on the selection process.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi and Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant are part of the selection committee.

They met on Tuesday but there was no official announcement on the panel's decision at the time of going to press.

However, Rahul presented a two-page dissent note to the PM alleging that despite repeated written requests, he was not provided with self-appraisal reports or 360-degree reports of the eligible candidates. "Instead, I was expected to examine the appraisal records of 69 candidates for the first time during the meeting. The 360-degree reports were denied to me," he alleged.

"This deliberate denial of information, without any legal basis, makes a mockery of the selection process and ensures that only your predecided candidate is selected," he alleged.

Rahul accused the government of reducing the selection process to a mere formality, adding the LoP cannot be a rubber stamp.

While several IPS officers were on the short list, discussions at the meet centred on three: Parag Jain, Shatrujeet Kapoor, Yogesh Gupta and G P Singh. Incumbent CBI Director Praveen Sood is scheduled to retire on May 24.

RACE ON...

Rahul meets former KPCC heads, Kerala CM call likely today

PREETHA NAIR @ New Delhi

THE deadlock over the selection of Kerala's next Chief Minister appears headed for a breakthrough, with senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday holding a last round of consultations with former KPCC presidents, working presidents and key leaders at Sonia Gandhi's house. The leadership opted for wider consultations to ensure that the decision to be seen as a collective one rather than a unilateral choice imposed by the high command.

While AICC general secretary K C Venugopal appears to be way ahead in the race, riding on the support of newly elected MLAs, sources said the name of the new CM is likely to be announced on Wednesday. The other two contenders are Ramesh Chennithala and V D Satheesan.

Of the senior leaders who met Rahul on Tuesday, a majority except former KPCC presidents V M Sudheeran and K Muraleedharan, were understood to have backed Venugopal's candidature.

Sources said Muraleedharan and Sudheeran conveyed to Rahul that public sentiment should be taken into consideration before deciding the new chief minister. However, opposing this view, some leaders told Rahul that the protests were not spontaneous but were orchestrated by certain leaders as a pressure tactic.

Cong's M M Hassan after meeting Sonia Gandhi in Delhi | PARVEEN NEGI

QUESTION OF TWO BY-ELECTIONS

Satheesan's camp also argues that if Venugopal is given the post, the UDF will have to face two by-elections – one to elect him to the assembly and another to elect a new MP for the Alappuzha Lok Sabha seat currently represented by Venugopal. The Venugopal camp claims he has the support of most MLAs and is a strategist capable of ensuring victory in the bypolls. His camp also claims that most of the Congress MPs from Kerala also support Venugopal

Sources also said UDF ally Muslim League's adamant support to Satheesan further complicated matters. Speaking to reporters, Muraleedharan said since it is the UDF CM, views of allies will also have to be considered.

The Chennithala camp says he is the senior most leader who has always stood by the party and the Nehru-Gandhi family. The leadership had come under pressure after failing to finalise the CM face nine days after election results were declared.

West Asia crisis is a stress test for India: CEA

DIPAK MONDAL @ New Delhi

THE West Asia crisis has become a live balance-of-payments stress test for India, with direct implications for inflation, the current account deficit (CAD) and the rupee, Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said on Tuesday. "Managing the current account credibly, financing it sustainably, and preventing further currency depreciation are the central macroeconomic imperatives of FY27," he said at the CII's Annual Business Summit.

CAD is expected to rise to 2.2% of GDP in FY27 from an estimated 0.8% in FY26. CAD is a situation when a country's imports exceed exports. A higher CAD weakens the currency, increases inflation risks and reduces economic stability. Rupee on Tuesday fell to another low of 95.63 against the dollar.

Nageswaran said 87% of crude oil is imported, with a major share transiting through or near the Hormuz. Around 60% of LPG comes from the Gulf, while 38% of annual remittances originate from Gulf nations.

"These are not the readings of a temporary shock that will self-correct when the situation stabilises." The CEA warned that the global economic architecture is undergoing a structural challenge rather than a temporary disruption.

Puri worry on losses

"How long the oil companies will continue to take losses, frankly, worries me," petroleum minister Hardeep Singh Puri said

K'taka orders closure of all trekking routes again

BOSKY KHANNA @ Bengaluru

AFTER the death of a 10-year-old boy in a leopard attack near Nagamale Hills, which is 11 km from Male Mahadeshwara (MM) Hills and situated inside the wildlife sanctuary, the Karnataka Forest Department on Tuesday ordered the closure of all trekking routes, wherever wildlife is sighted and till the listed standard operating procedures (SOPs) are fully in place.

Forest, Environment and Ecology Minister Eshwar B Khandre issued the orders in reaction to the boy getting killed by a leopard on Sunday. Prior to announcing the ban, Khandre held a high-level meeting with forest officials and later announced that pilgrims will be allowed to visit MM Hills and Nagamale Hills only during Shivaratri and Ugadi festivals. Further, people will be allowed to walk only 3 km and not 14 km. They will be permitted in small groups, accompanied by trained guides and forest staffers, who will carry walkie-talkies. "All devotees will have to take well-covered jeeps after buying tickets from designated counters. The view lines en route will be cleared for wildlife sightings. Similar will be the case at Nagamale Hills, where people are not allowed to climb 7 km," Khandre said.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Wildlife, Kumar Pushkar said the trek route closure is for the safety of the people. The SOPs too have been put out for the same reason. The department staff had been given till May 8 to implement the SOPs, but it is taking time to do so on the ground. Until the completion reports submitted and certificates issued, trekking will not be allowed, he said. **P7**

EXPRESS READ

K'taka transport staff get 12.5% salary hike

Bengaluru: The state government has issued an order for a 12.5% salary revision for employees and officers of the state's four road transport corporations, with retrospective effect from April 1, 2025. According to the government order, the revised pay scale will be implemented from the July salary cycle | **P6**

DEATH IN SLEEP

Man burnt alive as e-bike explodes while charging

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

A 65-year-old auto driver was burnt alive in his sleep after an electric two-wheeler which he had put to charge inside his house exploded at Murphy Town in Halasuru police limits in the early hours of Tuesday.

The deceased, Lourd Nathan, was a resident of 1st Square in Murphy Town. His son L Frank Anthony, a cab driver, filed a police complaint on the incident.

Nathan was staying alone on the ground floor, while Frank and his wife stay on the first floor of the same building. Around 3 am on Tuesday, they woke up to a loud explosion on the ground floor and immediately, a fire broke out. Frank rushed to the ground floor and managed to break open the door. He pulled out Nathan, who had sustained severe burns. Nathan was rushed to Bowring Hospital where the doctors declared him brought dead. "Nathan is said to have gone to sleep around 11 pm on Monday after putting the electric two-wheeler to charge inside the house," an officer said. **P5**

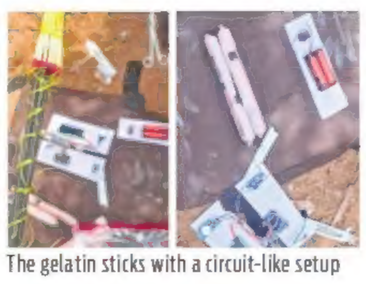
Gelatin had circuit-like setup, matchsticks tied with wires

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

INVESTIGATION into the recovery of gelatin sticks inside a cardboard box near Prime Minister Narendra Modi's convoy route on Sunday morning, revealed that the box also contained a suspected circuit-like setup, along with matchsticks tied together with wires to a stick, camphor, and a battery. The additional materials found inside the box raised suspicion that they could have been converted into an explosive device.

On Monday, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other central agencies, along with the state intelligence agency, began probing the matter. Just 30 minutes before the PM's arrival, during routine sanitisation, a police constable found the cardboard box lying 20ft away from the route through which PM Modi was scheduled to pass. The jurisdictional Kaggalipura police registered a case under the Explosive Substances Act and Explosives Act, and special teams have been formed for the investigation.

However, a senior police officer who is part of the investigation said the recovered materials were not in working condition for an immediate explosion. Police are analysing CCTV footage along the route to identify who placed the gelatin sticks and to ascertain the motive.



The gelatin sticks with a circuit-like setup

Home Minister Dr G Parameshwara said police are probing the matter. "I would not like to share the details at this stage. Regarding the hoax threat call, one person was arrested and is being interrogated. Gelatin sticks were recovered. I have received information on NIA seeking to probe the incident. If they ask, we will cooperate and let them investigate," he ,said adding that high-level security had been provided for the PM's programme by state and central agencies.

On a possible terror connection, he said, "I don't know. Nothing can be said until investigation is completed. We can only comment after the probe is over."

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